

SUBCHAPTER E—RESTRICTIONS ON PRIVATE CARRIAGE OF LETTERS

PART 310—ENFORCEMENT OF THE PRIVATE EXPRESS STATUTES

Sec.

- 310.1 Definitions.
- 310.2 Unlawful carriage of letters.
- 310.3 Exceptions.
- 310.4 Responsibility of carriers.
- 310.5 Payment of postage on violation.
- 310.6 Advisory opinions.
- 310.7 Amendment of regulations.

AUTHORITY: 39 U.S.C. 401, 404, 601-606; 18 U.S.C. 1693-1699.

SOURCE: 39 FR 33211, Sept. 16, 1974, unless otherwise noted.

§ 310.1 Definitions.

(a) *Letter* is a message directed to a specific person or address and recorded in or on a tangible object, subject to the following:

(1) Tangible objects used for letters include, but are not limited to, paper (including paper in sheet or card form), recording disks, and magnetic tapes. Tangible objects used for letters do not include (i) objects the material or shape and design of which make them valuable or useful for purposes other than as media for long-distance communications, unless they are actually used as media for personal and business correspondence, and (ii) outsized, rigid objects not capable of enclosure in envelopes, sacks, boxes or other containers commonly used to transmit letters or packets of letters.

(2) *Message* means any information or intelligence that can be recorded as described in paragraph (a)(4) of this section.

(3) A message is directed to a "specific person or address" when, for example, it, or the container in which it is carried, singly or with other messages, identical or different, is marked for delivery to a specific person or place, or is delivered to a specific person or place in accordance with a selective delivery plan. Selective delivery plans include delivery to particular persons or addresses by use of detached address labels or cards; address lists; memorized groups of addresses; or

"piggy-backed" delivery with addressed articles of merchandise, publications, or other items. Selective delivery plans do not include distributions of materials without written addresses to passersby on a particular street corner, or to all residents or randomly selected residents of an area. A message bearing the name or address of a specific person or place is a letter even if it is intended by the sender to be read or otherwise used by some person or persons other than or in addition to the addressee.

(4) Methods by which messages are recorded on tangible objects include, but are not limited to, the use of written or printed characters, drawing, holes, or orientations of magnetic particles in a manner having a predetermined significance.

(5) Whether a tangible object bears a message is to be determined on an objective basis without regard to the intended or actual use made of the object sent.

(6) Identical messages directed to more than one specific person or address or separately directed to the same person or address constitute separate letters.

(7) The following are not letters within the meaning of these regulations:¹

(i) Telegrams.

(ii) Checks, drafts, promissory notes, bonds, other negotiable and nonnegotiable financial instruments, stock certificates, other securities, insurance policies, and title policies when shipped to, from, or between financial institutions.

(A) As used above, *checks* and *drafts* include documents intrinsically related to and regularly accompanying the

¹Several of the items enumerated in this paragraph (a)(7) do not self-evidently lie outside of the definition of "letter". To the extent, however, that there is any question whether these items may properly be excluded by definition, the Postal Service has determined by adoption of these regulations that the restrictions of the Private Express Statutes are suspended pursuant to 39 U.S.C. 601(b).

movement of checks or drafts within the banking system. “Checks” do not include materials accompanying the movement of checks to financial institutions from persons who are not financial institutions, or vice versa, except such materials as would qualify under § 310.3(a) if “checks” were treated as cargo. Specifically, for example, “checks” do not include bank statements sent to depositors showing deposits, debits, and account balances.

(B) As used above, *financial institutions* means:

(1) As to checks and drafts: banks, savings banks, savings and loan institutions, credit unions, and their offices, affiliates, and facilities.

(2) As to other instruments: institutions performing functions involving the bulk generation, clearance, and transfer of such instruments.

(iii) Abstracts of title, mortgages and other liens, deeds, leases, releases, articles of incorporation, papers filed in lawsuits or formal quasi-judicial proceedings, and orders of courts and of quasi-judicial bodies.

(iv) Newspapers and periodicals.

(v) Books and catalogs consisting of 24 or more bound pages with at least 22 printed, and telephone directories. Separate letters of less than 24 bound and 22 printed pages bound to other material do not qualify for this exclusion. In determining whether separate letters have been bound to other material, the following factors will be considered, along with any other relevant factors: Whether the parts are visually similar; whether the parts were printed and bound together at the same time and by the same process; whether the binding serves an important purpose and has been a longstanding practice; and whether the same individual reads all parts of the bound document. Ordinarily, books and catalogs deal with matters of interest to, and are intended for, a substantial number of recipients. In addition, books generally contain a substantial number of pages. Accordingly, this exclusion will not apply when the nature of the message conveyed, the limited numbers of published copies and of recipients, the limited number of pages, or other relevant factors suggest that it is not appropriate to treat the material as a book

or catalog. An item distributed privately, or privately and by mail, to fewer than 25 separate persons or places will generally not be treated as a book or catalog falling within this exclusion.

(vi) Matter sent from a printer, stationer, or similar source, to a person ordering such matter for use as his letters. This exclusion applies whether or not the printer, stationer, or similar source is owned by or affiliated with the person who orders such matter for use as his letters.

(vii) Letters sent to a records storage center exclusively for storage, letters sent exclusively for destruction, letters retrieved from a records storage center, and letters sent as part of a household or business relocation.

(viii) Tags, labels, stickers, signs or posters the type-size, layout or physical characteristics of which indicate they are primarily intended to be attached to other objects for reading.

(ix) Photographic material being sent by a person to a processor and processed photographic material being returned from the processor to the person sending the material for processing.

(x) Copy sent from a person to an independent or company-owned printer or compositor, or between printers and compositors, and proofs or printed matter returned from the printer or compositor to the office of the person who initially sent the copy.

(xi) Sound recordings, films, and packets of identical printed letters containing messages all or the overwhelming bulk of which are to be disseminated to the public. The “public” does not include individuals residing at the place of address; individuals employed by the organization doing business at the place of address (whether or not the actual place of employment is the place of address); individuals who are members of an organization, if an organization is located at the place of address; or other individuals who, individually or as members of a group, are reasonably identifiable to the sender.

(xii) Computer programs recorded on media suitable for direct input. For the conditions under which the Private Express Statutes are suspended for data processing materials, see § 320.2.

United States Postal Service

§ 310.2

(b) *Packet* means two or more letters, identical or different, or two or more packets of letters, under one cover or otherwise bound together. As used in these regulations, unless the context otherwise requires, “letter” or “letters” includes “packet” or “packets”.

(c) *Person* means an individual, corporation, association, partnership, governmental agency, or other organization or entity.

(d) *Post routes* are routes on which mail is carried by the Postal Service, and includes post roads as defined in 39 U.S.C. 5003, as follows:

(1) The waters of the United States, during the time the mail is carried thereon;

(2) Railroads or parts of railroads and air routes in operation;

(3) Canals, during the time the mail is carried thereon;

(4) Public roads, highways, and toll roads during the time the mail is carried thereon; and

(5) Letter-carrier routes established for the collection and delivery of mail.

(e) *Private carriage, private carrier*, and terms of similar import used in connection with the Private Express Statutes or these regulations mean carriage by anyone other than the Postal Service, regardless of any meaning ascribed to similar terms under other bodies of law or regulation.

(f) The *Private Express Statutes* are set forth in 18 U.S.C. 1693–1699 and 39 U.S.C. 601–606 (1970).

(g) The term *identical printed letters* includes letters that differ only in name, address or serial number.

[39 FR 33211, Sept. 16, 1974, as amended at 44 FR 52833, Sept. 11, 1979; 45 FR 3034, Jan. 16, 1980; 45 FR 59873, Sept. 11, 1980; 48 FR 42354, Sept. 27, 1982]

§ 310.2 Unlawful carriage of letters.

(a) It is generally unlawful under the Private Express Statutes for any person other than the Postal Service in any manner to send or carry a letter on a post route or in any manner to cause or assist such activity. Violation may result in injunction, fine or imprisonment or both and payment of postage lost as a result of the illegal activity (see § 310.5).

(b) Activity described in paragraph (a) of this section is lawful with respect to a letter if:

(1)(i) The letter is enclosed in an envelope or other suitable cover;

(ii) The amount of postage which would have been charged on the letter if it had been sent through the Postal Service is paid by stamps, or postage meter stamps, on the cover or by other methods approved by the Postal Service;

(iii) The name and address of the person for whom the letter is intended appear on the cover;

(iv) The cover is so sealed that the letter cannot be taken from it without defacing the cover;

(v) Any stamps on the cover are canceled in ink by the sender; and

(vi) The date of the letter, or of its transmission or receipt by the carrier, is endorsed on the cover in ink by the sender or carrier, as appropriate; or

(2)(i) The activity is in accordance with the terms of a written agreement between the shipper or the carrier of the letter and the Postal Service. Such an agreement may include some or all of the provisions of paragraph (b)(1) of this section, or it may change them, but it must:

(A) Adequately ensure payment of an amount equal to the postage to which the Postal Service would have been entitled had the letters been carried in the mail;

(B) Remain in effect for a specified period (subject to renewals); and

(C) Provide for periodic review, audit, and inspection.

(ii) Possible alternative arrangements may include but are not limited to:

(A) Payment of a fixed sum at specified intervals based on the shipper's projected shipment of letters for a given period, as verified by the Postal Service; or

(B) Utilization of a computer record to determine the volume of letters shipped during an interval and the applicable postage to be remitted to the Postal Service.

(c) The Postal Service may suspend the operation of any part of paragraph (b) of this section where the public interest requires the suspension.